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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 HARARE 000843

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TAGS: PREL PGOV PHUM ASEC ZI
SUBJECT: ENDING THE IMPASSE

REF: A) HARARE 832 B) HARARE 826

Classified By: CDA Donald Pettersen for reason 1.4 (d)

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) Next week in Harare will see a flurry of activity aimed at ending the MDC's "disengagement" from ZANU-PF and a resumption of government under the Global Political Agreement (GPA). Prime Minister Morgan Tsvangirai, who will return to Harare on October 23 after meeting with regional leaders, will meet with President Robert Mugabe and Deputy Prime Minister Arthur Mutambara on October 26. On October 29, the three principals and their GPA negotiators from the three parties will meet with Southern African Development Community (SADC) Troika representatives and a representative from South Africa, the GPA facilitator. With both Mugabe and the MDC-T interested in the survival of the GPA and pressure on Mugabe from at least parts of SADC, compromise on the four outstanding issues--the appointments of Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe governor Gideon Gono and Attorney General Johannes Tomana, the swearing-in of Roy Bennett as Deputy Secretary of Agriculture, and the appointment of provincial governors--and an end to the current impasse is likely in the next couple of weeks. END SUMMARY.

A Week of Disengagement

¶2. (C) After declaring that the MDC would disengage from ZANU-PF (Refs), Tsvangirai traveled to South Africa and onward to meet with SADC leaders and seek SADC pressure on Mugabe to comply with the GPA. The MDC held a "Cabinet" meeting chaired by Deputy Prime Minister Thokozani Khupe yesterday to discuss the impasse. Khupe told the Charge today that the MDC remained solidly behind the policy of "disengagement." She noted that there were four outstanding issues that formed the basis of the MDC pullout: the appointments of Gono and Tomana in violation of the GPA,

Mugabe's refusal to swear-in Roy Bennett as Deputy Secretary of Agriculture, and Mugabe's refusal to honor an agreement made with Tsvangirai in June to swear-in provincial governors. Khupe said that appointment of governors and resolution of the Bennett issue would be enough for the MDC to reengage; the removal of Gono and Tomana were part of a "process" that the MDC would continue to pursue. Echoing Tsvangirai (Ref A), Khupe said that if no agreement were reached, the MDC would move for elections.

¶3. (C) For its part, ZANU-PF has so far been relatively restrained. Columnists in The Herald have alleged that the MDC action was precipitated because Bennett is white, and that this demonstrates that the MDC is taking instructions from the West. But leading ZANU-PF politicians, including Mugabe, have not gone on the attack. And yesterday, The Herald's banner headline was "Tsvangirai still PM, says Govt." The accompanying article quoted Mugabe spokesman George Charamba that Mugabe still considered Tsvangirai the prime minister since Tsvangirai had not communicated anything to the contrary. Mugabe presided over the weekly Cabinet Qto the contrary. Mugabe presided over the weekly Cabinet meeting on Tuesday without MDC-T ministers. According to a ZANU-PF minister, quoted by The Herald, "It was business as usual."

MDC-M in the Middle

¶4. (U) MDC-M Deputy Prime Minister has tried to carve out a
HARARE 00000843 002 OF 003

role as mediator. He met with Mugabe on Monday and later in the day spoke to Tsvangirai in South Africa urging reconciliation. He later held a press conference in which he blasted the rearrest of Bennett and the failure to swear him in; he pointed out that he, Minister of Finance Tendai Biti, and Minister of Constitutional Affairs Eric Matinenga all had pending charges, yet had been sworn in. He said MDC-T was justified in the action it had taken, but MDC-M would attend Cabinet meetings to act as a check on ZANU-PF and prevent if from taking unwise decisions. He asserted that there were ZANU-PF hardliners that wanted the government to fail, but that the three parties should work for its success. Mutambara also argued that Mugabe had not been legitimately elected, and that the legitimacy of the government rested on the GPA. If the MDC were to renounce the GPA and pull out of government, there would be no government and Mugabe would have no legitimacy as president.

¶5. (C) Mutambara told us today he thought the issues of appointment of governors and Roy Bennett should be easily resolved. The appointments of Gono and Tomana were problematic, however. While it was obvious, according to Mutambara, that the appointments violated the GPA, Mugabe had publicly stated he would not rescind them. Mutambara suggested Tsvangirai would have to compromise. A longtime critic of sanctions, he suggested that Tsvangirai call for the removal of sanctions to get buy-in from Mugabe on outstanding issues.

Tsvangirai Seeks SADC Support

¶6. (C) Over the last couple of days, Tsvangirai met with presidents Guebuza of Mozambique and Zuma of South Africa. Khupe, who had been briefed by Tsvangirai, said the meeting with Zuma was positive. Zuma was concerned about spillover effect from an unstable Zimbabwe for the World Cup in 2010 and took the position that Mugabe should comply with the GPA. Guebuza, on the other hand, told Tsvangirai that the GPA issues were internal, and that he and Mugabe should resolve them. Tsvangirai is traveling to the Congo and Angola to meet presidents Kabilo and Dos Santos and will return Friday

to Harare.

¶7. (C) According to Mutambara and MDC sources, the three GPA principals--Mugabe, Tsvangirai, and Mutambara--will meet together on October 26. The same sources indicate the SADC Troika of the Organ on Politics, Security and Defence (Mozambique, Swaziland, and Zambia), accompanied by South Africa as the GPA facilitator, will meet with the principals and the GPA negotiators from the three parties on October 29 in Harare. (NOTE: Khupe told the Charge that she had met with King Mswati of Swaziland and President Banda a couple of weeks ago. She said they were very frustrated with Mugabe and supportive of the MDC's position on outstanding issues. END NOTE.)

COMMENT

¶8. (C) With notable exceptions, Mugabe and most of ZANU-PF do not want the GPA to collapse and this is reflected in their relatively restrained reaction to the MDC's actions. Mugabe believes he can maintain the balance of power within the GPA, and that the collapse of the GPA could result in chaos. The MDC has no Plan B except for elections and, if it were to leave government, it is unclear how it could cause elections to be held. The ultimate goal of the MDC--successful elections--is best realized by remaining in government. Therefore, once again, it is in the interest of

HARARE 00000843 003 OF 003

both sides to compromise.

¶9. (C) The most likely areas for compromise are the appointments of governors and swearing-in of Bennett, although ZANU-PF could drag this out until after his trial, scheduled for November 9. Because of Mugabe's public pronouncements, rescission of the appointments of Gono and Tomana will be more difficult. The key to a compromise will be the ability of both sides to save face. Tsvangirai will have to get something substantial, although not everything. And Mugabe will have to get something. This could be a statement by Tsvangirai that he supports the removal of economic sanctions (read sanctions against banks and parastatals, not against individuals), a position he and Minister of Finance Tendai Biti have supported in private conversations. An agreement is likely, and the Inclusive Government will continue to function with incremental progress. END COMMENT.

PETTERSON